

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held at Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 16th May, 2024.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr A Brady, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Ms S Hamilton, Ms J Hawkins, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Mr P Stepto, Dr L Sullivan, Mr M Reidy, Mr Q Roper and Mrs R Binks (Substitute for Mrs L Game)

OTHER MEMBERS: Sue Chandler and Rory Love, OBE

OFFICERS: David Adams (Assistant Director Education (South Kent)), Sarah Hammond (Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education), Ingrid Crisan (Director of Operations, Integrated Children's Services), Christy Holden (Head of Children's Commissioning), Ian Watts (Assistant Director Education, North), Alison Farmer (Assistant Director for SEND, Principal Educational Psychologist), Kevin Kasaven (Director of Children's Countywide Services), Christine McInnes (Director of Education), Samantha Sheppard (Senior Commissioner), Mike Rayner (Principal Post-16 Lead (TEP)), Jude Farrell (Interim Head of Service), Siobhan Price (Assistant Director, School Inclusion) and Robert Veale (Assistant Director Education (East Kent))

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mrs McArthur, Mr Beaney and Mrs Game for whom Mrs Binks was present as substitute.

2. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024
(Item 4)

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024 were a correct record.

4. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members
(Item 5)

1. Mr Love provided his Cabinet Member verbal update as follows:

1.1 Primary School Offer Day

- On 16 April, primary school placements were offered for September 2024. Out of 16,653 Kent applicants, nearly 99% were offered one of their three preferred schools and over 91% were offered their first preference.
- Parents and carers were given until 30 April to accept the offer or they could refuse and ask to join a waiting list for an alternative school.
- The deadline for appeals closed on 14 May. The Admissions Team was reallocating places from schools' waiting lists and would send out a second round of offers on 23 May. Mr Love thanked the officers within the Admissions Team for ensuring that over 16,000 pupils received a school place offer by the deadline.

1.2 School Attendance Update

- The Department for Education recently published its latest statistics on school attendance. While the levels of attendance were still below pre-Covid levels, there had been improvements.
- The combined overall absence for primary and secondary schools within Kent had decreased year on year by 1.1% in Autumn 2023, and persistent absence had fallen by 5.1%. For special schools, overall absence fell by 0.4%, and persistent absence fell by 3.8%. Mr Love paid tribute to the ongoing work by KCC's Attendance Team in tackling the issue.
- Mr Love noted that school attendance was not primarily the responsibility of the Council. Academy Trustees, Governing Bodies, Schools, and Academies all had a role to play, and parents were legally responsible for ensuring their child received a suitable full-time education.

1.3 SEND Information Roadshows

- Four SEND Information Roadshows have taken place to date. All the Roadshows had been fully booked and 180 families attended.
- The SEND service was exploring the possibility of digitising the content of the Roadshows to enable access to a wider audience, and more Roadshows planned in the future.

1.4 SEND Enquiry Hub Update

- At the beginning of April 2023, the SEND Enquiry Hub was launched to help improve communication with SEND services. By the end of March 2024, the SEND Enquiry Hub had supported 11,554 families with their queries and 99.8% of these queries had been resolved within five working days.
- Work was now underway to enhance the database's accuracy which would add additional capability to the Hub.

1.5 Isle of Sheppey Schools

- There have been significant developments in respect to the secondary school proposals on the Isle of Sheppey.

- The DfE issued the formal closure letter to Oasis Community Learning, this allowed Leigh Academies Trust and EKC Schools Trust to proceed with the next stages of establishing two new academies on the Isle for September 2024.
 - Families affected by the change had been contacted on 25 March to begin the process of identifying a place at one of the new academies.
 - Mr Love welcomed the news as a positive next step for education on the Isle of Sheppey.
2. Mr Love offered to obtain and share with Mr Sandhu details about the number of children missing school in the Dartford area.
 3. Mrs Chandler provided her Cabinet Member verbal update as follows:
 - 3.1 Family Hubs Update
 - The majority of staff appointments had been made and the remaining vacancies were advertised on the KCC website.
 - Some sites have been renamed to ensure accessibility to all.
 - There were interim service timetables in place at the existing Family Hubs and Children’s Centres, however, they were to be revised and full service timetables would be available from June onwards.
 - A variety of outreach sessions were being introduced across the County, particularly in locations where centres had closed. For example, outreach sessions were to be piloted at Faversham Library, which was a 5-minute walk away from St Mary’s Children’s Centre.
 - 3.2 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Update
 - There had been 77 UASC arrivals so far this month, and the total for the year was currently 748. There were 85 children awaiting dispersal via the National Transfer Scheme. The largest proportion of arrivals were from Afghanistan, followed by Iran and Sudan. The majority of arrivals were aged 16 and 17, however, there were some younger arrivals.
 - The Council would look to find an alternative site for the UASC Reception Centre planned at Ocean Hights on the Isle of Sheppey. Elsewhere, work at the identified sites continued with full communication with residents.
 - A detailed FAQ section was available on the Council’s website that was regularly updated.
 4. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - The Family Hubs would be operating with a fuller timetable in June.
 - A dedicated Family Hubs webpage was under development that was intended to include all the information service users needed. This was expected to be operational within the next few weeks.

- Some Family Hub services were universal, and some used a referral system to allow planning for the number of people attending. There was also the option to self-refer in some cases.
- The advert was currently live for family coach volunteers. It was planned to eventually have 12 coaches in each district if the small scale trial was successful.
- A list of outreach services for the Canterbury area could be provided to Mr Brady.

5. The verbal updates were noted.

5. Presentation - An Overview of Post 16 Education (Item 6)

Mike Rayner, Principal Post-16 Lead – The Education People was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Rayner shared a presentation that provided the Committee with an overview of the post 16 education system.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - There was a team who tracked and worked to support young people not in education or training (NEETs). Work was underway with providers to assess strengths, weakness and gaps in provision. It was hoped that this increase in understanding and awareness would help to reduce the number of NEETs over the next couple of years.
 - Dr Sullivan asked if the courses provided within the new Framework for Adult Education, were comparable with others across the Country. Mrs McInnes offered to provide Dr Sullivan with a written response after the meeting.
 - Schools were becoming increasingly aware of the value in offering vocational studies. The introduction of T Level courses were intended to help increase the perceived intellectual value of vocational qualifications, however it was too early to assess their impact at this stage.
 - The Careers Enterprise Company was a national body that worked with primary school children to give career guidance. Secondary schools were required to give students a number of encounters with employers and should be encouraged to hold apprenticeship fares.
 - Some small employers struggled to provide the right support to apprentices.
 - The Kent Choices website had a comprehensive list of courses, apprenticeships and other opportunities available to young people.
 - There were commissioned staff that went into special schools to provide careers advice to young people with SEND.
 - The voices of young people were captured when the Pathways for All initiative was developed. A review was now underway to ensure that the initiative continued to reflect the voice of young people.
 - One of the roles of the Employment Task Force was to support young people transition into work. This included a co-ordinated approach to encourage apprenticeships by looking at what has worked and what has not worked in the past.
 - Mr Reidy asked if young people with SEND or EHCP's were required to achieve the same minimum grades as other young people in order to

proceed into 6th form. Mr Rayner offered to find out and provide Mr Reidy with a response outside of the meeting.

- The Chairman thanked Mr Rayner of his presentation and noted that topic knit into the work of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee.

3. RESOLVED to note the report

6. 24/00027 - Specialist Nursery Intervention Service Level Agreement Extension (Item 7)

Samantha Sheppard, Senior Commissioner (Inclusion and SEN), Christy Holden, Head of Children's Commissioning and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Holden introduced the report noting that the decision related to a report considered by the Committee in January 2024. She added that a report would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee with details of the consultation results.

2. Mr Love confirmed that the decision fell within his Education and Skills portfolio.

3. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:

- This was a commissioned service that provided services within special schools from their on-site nurseries.
- A consultation was planned to enable more children to receive support, and to provide a more consistent service across the County.

3. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Education to:

- a) Extend the existing Service Level Agreements for Specialist Nursery Intervention for one year from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025.
- b) Delegate decisions and necessary actions, including the award and the implementation of the extensions, to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, or other Officer as instructed by the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member.

7. Kent SEND Transformation Projects (Item 8)

Siobhan Price, Assistant Director, School Inclusion, Alison Farmer, Assistant Director for SEND, Principal Educational Psychologist and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Price introduced the report noting the intention was to align the projects to generate cohesive systemwide change across the County.

2. RESOLVED to progress the following three items and their recommendations:
- a) The Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion
 - b) Special School Review and

c) Specialist Resource Provision Review.

8. 24/00026 - The Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion
(Item 8a)

Siobhan Price, Assistant Director, School Inclusion, and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - There had been 1400 responses to the consultation. The consultation feedback showed a need to provide further clarification around the proposed changes.
 - The intention was to provide a better continuity of service when children moved between phases.
 - The reclassification of special schools had not been done anywhere else in the Country, and there was concern that the Council may not have sufficient resources to implement such wide scale changes.
 - There would be a motion at Full Council asking for a review of the proposed SEND changes.
 - The Council's Safety Valve Agreement with the Department for Education assisted the Council to pay for a £142 million overspend. There was a need to reduce costs to match the amount of funding received and the Locality Model would help to achieve this.
 - It was recognised that the current system fell short in some areas. The Locality Model was the culmination of four years of work that drew upon evidence to generate a proposal for improvement.
2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision to adopt a Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion in Kent.

9. Proposals for the Review of Special Schools
(Item 8b)

Alison Farmer, Assistant Director for SEND, Principal Educational Psychologist and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - The intention was to ensure that children with complex needs had the opportunity to attend an appropriate school.
 - There was a proposal to increase support for secondary schools where gaps were identified. A grant had been awarded to support a pilot scheme for the inclusion of children with neurodiversity needs within schools. This could be expanded across Kent and Medway if the pilot was successful.
 - There was no classification for physical SEND conditions because the Equalities Act 2010 already required all schools to make reasonable adjustments to allow the inclusion of those with physical disabilities.
 - Currently each special school had their own admission criteria. There was a need to ensure that children with the most complex needs had access to these services.
2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed future pathway pertaining to the review and associated proposals for public consultation.

10. Specialist Resource Provision Review Update
(Item 8c)

Siobhan Price, Assistant Director, School Inclusion, and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. RESOLVED to note the report.

11. 24/00023 - School Term Dates 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28
(Item 9)

Christy Holden, Head of Children's Commissioning and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director CYPE were in attendance for this item.

1. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agree the school term dates for KCC community and voluntary controlled schools for the school years 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28.

12. 24/00045 - KCC CLS Accountability Agreement
(Item 15)

Jude Farrell, Interim Head of Service and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education were in attendance for this item.

1. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to:
 - a) Approve the Annual Accountability Statement; for submission to the DfE;
 - b) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to take the relevant actions as necessary to implement the decision, including future annual sign off and submission of the Annual Accountability Statement

13. School Expansions and Alterations
(Item 10)

14. 24/00025 - Expansion of Northfleet Technology College, Gravesend
(Item 10a)

Ian Watts, Assistant Director Education, North and Christine McInnes, Director of Education was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Watts introduced the report.
2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:
 - a) Approve the expansion of Northfleet Technology College from a PAN of 165 to a PAN of 189.
 - b) Agree to allocate the funding from the CYPE Capital Budget that will be required to complete the project.

- c) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to, in consultation with the Director of Education, enter into any necessary contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.
- d) Agree for the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements, with authority to enter variations as envisaged under the contracts.

15. 24/00024 - Expansion of Leigh Academy, Dartford
(Item 10b)

Ian Watts, Assistant Director Education, North and Christine McInnes, Director of Education was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Watts introduced the report and advised that traffic impact and mitigation measures would be considered as part of the feasibility work that would be carried out before the expansion could take place.
2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:
 - a) Approve the expansion of Leigh Academy by 2FE.
 - b) Agree to allocate £425,000, subject to a binding funding agreement, from the CYPE Capital Budget to the Leigh Academy Trust (LAT), to:
 - a. enable design work for the essential internal and external works.
 - b. enable LAT to undertake essential internal modification works, during 2024.
 - c) Agree to allocate £975,000 from the CYPE Capital Budget, to enable KCC to undertake feasibility checks, design, plan, cost and tender for the project to construct a new standalone block, from June 2024.
 - d) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to, in consultation with the Director of Education, enter into any necessary contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.
 - e) Agree for the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements, with authority to enter variations as envisaged under the contracts.
3. The Committee noted that subject to the delivery of the above proposed decision, the decision on final progression of the project would be taken at a later date, taking account of any comments made by the Cabinet Committee on the report.

16. 24/00040 - Proposal to add four classrooms at Whitfield Aspen Primary School (Richmond Way site)
(Item 10c)

David Adams, Assistant Director - Education (South Kent) and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Adams introduced the report.
2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:

- a) Approve the allocation of up to £2,800,000 of capital funding from the CYPE capital budget to add an eight classroom block at Whitfield Aspen Primary School (Richmond Way site).
- b) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts or other legal agreements as required to implement this decision.
- c) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

17. 24/00039 - Replacement of temporary classrooms and hall at Langdon Primary School, Dover
(Item 10d)

- 1. Mr Adams introduced the report.
- 2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:
 - a) Approve the allocation of £1,430,000 capital funding from the Children's, Young People and Education modernisation capital budget to replace the modular classroom and wooden hall/classroom at Langdon Primary School.
 - b) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts or other legal agreements as required to implement this decision.
 - c) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts officer, to undertake the necessary actions to implement the decision.

18. 24/00041 - Mobile replacement scheme at Blean Primary School
(Item 10e)

Robert Vale, Assistant Director Education, East, and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

- 1. Mr Vale introduced the report.
- 2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:
 - a) Approve the allocation of £1,440,000 from the Children's, Young People and Education Modernisation Programme to permit the required works for the modular replacement.
 - b) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to, in consultation with the Director of Education, enter into any necessary contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.
 - c) Agree for the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements, with authority to enter variations as envisaged under the contracts.

19. Work Programme
(Item 11)

1. RESOLVED to note the work programme.

20. Motion to exclude the press and public for exempt business
(Item 12)

1. RESOLVED that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

EXEMPT ITEMS
(Open access minutes)

21. Regional Care Cooperative Update
(Item 13)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director CYPE was in attendance for this item.

1. Mrs Hammond provided Members with early notification that the South East had been selected to participate in one of two Regional Care Cooperative pilot schemes. She advised that a briefing note with further information would be circulated in due course.

22. 24/00047 - Services Provided by The Education People
(Item 14)

David Adams, Assistant Director - Education (South Kent) and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Adams introduced the report.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - The corporate overhead costs included items such as management costs, building costs and insurance. Mr Adams offered to provide Mr Brady with a more detailed breakdown of the overhead costs after the meeting.
 - An assessment needed to be made of the condition and suitability of the equipment held at the Emporium. Where possible the equipment would be made available to children with SEND.
 - Members' comments regarding the need to review the viability of The Education People (TEP) and outdoor learning services were taken on board.
 - Some of the proposed savings were to be achieved at sites that were currently closed or would become unavailable for use in the near future. In cases where these assets were owned by the Council, they would be subject to the Council's asset disposal process.
3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, in consultation with Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, agree to:

- a) to reduce the value of the core contract with The Education People by £0.9m over the next 2 years through the changes to the service specification set out in Table 1 and Appendix A of the decision report;
- b) to delegate authority to Director of Education & SEN to take the necessary actions to implement the decision.